DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 102 SO 021 639

AUTHOR	Mayton, Daniel M., II
TITLE	Values and the Salience of the Nuclear Threat: Social and Developmental Implications.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Aug 90
CONTRACT	G008720244
NOTE	21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (98th, Boston, MA, August 10-14, 1990).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Adults; Age Differences; *Attitude Measures; *Developmental Psychology; Developmental Stages; *Nuclear Warfare; Peace; *Social Science Research; *Values; World Affairs; World Problems

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to identify developmental differences in the value priorities for individuals who spontaneously expressed a concern about nuclear war and those who did not. The Rokeach Value Survey and the Spontaneous Concern About the Nuclear Threat Scale were administered to a sample of over 5,000 adolescents and over 900 adult community members in the rural inland northwest. About one in four of the adolescents and older adults expressed concern about nuclear war. A significantly smaller proportion of the younger adults expressed concern about a nuclear war than the adolescents and older adults. Value priorities were found to differentiate significantly the two concern groups across the age span. Adolescents and adults who expressed concern about a nuclear war placed higher priorities on the social values of a world at peace. Respondents who did not express a concern about nuclear war placed higher priorities on the individual values of an exciting life and pleasure. (A list of 14 references and a number of tables conveying the survey data are appended.) (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED347102

Values and the Salience of the Nuclear Threat: Social and Developmental Implications

Daniel M. Mayton II

Lewis-Clark State College

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

DANIEL M. MAYTON II

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SO 021 639

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Boston, MA, August, 1990. This research was supported in part by a grant from the U. S. Department of Education (Grant No. G00 8720244).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

This study was designed to identify developmental differences in the value priorities for individuals who spontaneously expressed a concern about nuclear war and those who did not. The Rokeach Value Survey and the Spontaneous Concern About The Nuclear Threat Scale were administered to a sample of over 5000 adolescents and over 900 adult community members in the rural inland northwest. About one in four of the adolescents and older adults expressed concern about nuclear war. A significantly smaller proportion of the younger adults expressed concern about a nuclear war than the adolescent and older adults. Value priorities were found to significantly differentiate the two concern groups across the age span. Adolescents and adults who expressed concern about a nuclear war placed higher priorities on the social values a world at peace. Respondents who did not express a concern about nuclear war placed higher priorities on the individual values of an exciting life and pleasure.

Values and the Salience of the Nuclear Threat:

Social and Developmental Implications

Various reviews of psychological literature dealing with attitudes toward the threat of nuclear war have noted developmental trends from childhood through adulthood (e.g. Dodds, 1983; Mayton, 1986). Research findings generally indicate that as people grow older, from junior high to high school to college and on through adulthood, they report less concern or worry about the threat of nuclear war (e.g. Blackwell and Gessner, 1983; Jeffries, 1974).

Salience focuses attention on issue relevant thoughts, feelings, and actions (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). When an issue is made salient, the usual result will be responses consistent with previously held thoughts, beliefs, and actions which are more extreme or intense than would otherwise have been made (Fiske, 1987). Since support for a bilateral nuclear freeze is strong in the United States, keeping the nuclear threat salient is important for profreeze and other groups in the "peace movement". Numerous researchers have assessed the salience of the nuclear threat with a single age group. For instance, salience of the nuclear threat has been assessed with adolescents by Escalona (1965), Macpherson & Meador (1987) and with college students by Elder (1965), Mayton (1986) and Hamilton (1987).

The first purpose of this study is to better understand the developmental trends regarding the salience of the threat of nuclear war. It is hypothesized that the same trends observed for direct assessments of worry about the nuclear threat will be

observed for the indirect assessment of nuclear threat salience. Higher percentages of younger age groups are hypothesized to hold the nuclear threat as a salient fear or concern than older age groups.

The second purpose of this study is to assess the value priority differences between those who hold the threat of nuclear war as salient and those who do not. An earlier study (Mayton, 1989) demonstrated that as a large group, adolescents who are concerned about the nuclear threat do have different value priorities than those who are not concerned. The present study assesses value differences across six different age groups. It is hypothesized that the values of those who hold the nuclear threat as salient will differ from those who do not. While value hierarchies change across the lifespan (e.g. Rokeach, 1973), it is expected that each age group will demonstrate differences in value priorities between the concerned and the unconcerned. More specifically, it is hypothesized that individuals who hold the nuclear threat salient will place higher priorities on the value of a world at peace, national security, equality and other society-oriented values and lower priorities on personally-oriented values than individuals who do not find the nuclear threat a salient issue.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were 5128 adolescents from 31 different schools in north central Idaho and southeastern

Washington and 912 adults from these same communities. All adolescent students present in the school on the day of the administration were given the questionnaire to complete except for two larger schools in the study which selected representative courses across all ability levels for the administration of the questionnaire. The participating adults in the survey were generally workers at major employers in the region along with "community leaders" who completed the survey in regularly scheduled meetings of groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, PTA, Kiwanis, Lions, Elks and other civic and recreational groups. The demographic breakdown of the adolescents and the adults are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Design and Instrumentation

This study utilized two large written questionnaires which were administered as part of the needs assessment phase of a Drug Education Infusion Grant funded by the U. S. Department of Education. The questionnaires were anonymously administered during the spring of 1988. The items on the questionnaire assessed a range of demographic information, drug usage and attitudes towards drugs, and general values. This paper focuses on the general values and the expression of concern about the threat of nuclear war across ages.

The salience of the nuclear threat was assessed using Spontaneous Concern About the Nuclear Threat Scale (SCANTS). Mayton (1986, 1987) developed the SCANTS which reliably and validly assesses the salience of the nuclear threat by providing respondents with ten opportunities to mention nuclear war as a fear or worry. The SCANTS presents five incomplete sentences of "I worry about..." and five incomplete sentences of "One of my fears regarding the future is...". If respondents mention nuclear war or some related term for any of the ten incomplete sentences, they are classified as being concerned about the nuclear threat. If they do not provide a nuclear war related response to any of the ten incomplete sentences, they are classified as not being concerned about the nuclear threat.

The terminal values of the respondents were assessed by the Rokeach Value Survey - Form G (RVS) which requires respondents to rank 18 terminal values (end-states) according to their importance as a guiding principle in their lives. The highest value is assigned a 1, the second highest value a number 2, and this process continues until the lowest value is assigned the number 18.

RESULTS

Age Differences Across Nuclear Threat Salience

The participants were placed into six different age groups based on school groupings and political generations. Adolescents in grades seven through nine (Junior High ages) and those in grades ten through twelve (Senior High ages) were in the first two age groups. The adult age groups were based on an extension of the

political generation groupings described by Jeffries (1974). Adults were placed into one of four political generations depending on historical events and the world climate when they became of "political age" or 18 years old. Those in the World War II generation were born before 1927 and those in the Cold War generation were born between 1927 and 1942. The generation of Dissent was born between 1943 and 1954 and the Me generation included adults born after 1954.

A 2 X 6 chi square test was computed assessing differences between age groups represented in the sample. The cell frequencies and the results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Spontaneous expression of concern was significantly different across age groups (29.216, df=5, $p < .001$). Sequential pairwise 2 X 2 chi-square analyses were used to collapse ajacent cells in the 2 X 6 matrix to identify where the developmental shifts were located. These analyses revealed no significant difference between the two adolescent groups and no differences between the first three adult political generation groups. The threat of nuclear war was significantly more salient for the combined group of all adolescents than the combined group of the first three generations of adults. This trend reversed itself for the oldest generation of adults as they held the nuclear threat to be significantly more salient than the younger adult generations.

Value Differences Across Nuclear Threat Salience

The composite ranks for the terminal value hierarchies were determined for the nuclear threat salient group and the nuclear threat not salient group for each age group using the median rankings given by the respective age group members. When the medians for any pair of values were equal, the means for the pair were checked to derive the group hierarchy. The terminal value hierarchies for the nuclear threat salient and nuclear threat not salient groups are presented separately for each age grouping in Tables 3 though 8.

Insert Tables 3 through 8 About Here

The terminal value hierarchies for the two groups of adolescents who held the nuclear threat as a salient issue and those adolescents who did not differed in the expected directions. Using the Man-Whitney U statistic, eight of the 18 value priorities were found to significantly differentiate the concerned and not concerned for the junior high adolescents and seven of the 18 values were significant for the senior high adolescents. Adolescents in both age groups who expressed concern about a nuclear war placed significantly higher priorities on the social value of a world at peace. Adolescents who did not express a concern about nuclear war placed significantly higher priorities on the individual values of an exciting life, mature love, and pleasure.

The terminal value hierarchies for the four political generations of adults who held the nuclear threat as a salient issue and those adults who did not hold it salient did not differ as markedly as the adolescent groups. Using the Man-Whitney U statistic, only two of the 18 value priorities were found to significantly differentiate the concerned and not concerned for the "me generation" and only 5, 3, and 0 differences were identified for the "age of dissent", "cold war", and "World War II" generations, respectively.

While the value placed on a world at peace significantly differentiated the "me generation" and "age of dissent" adults who held the nuclear war as a salient issue and those who did not. While this pattern held for the "cold war" generation, it was not statistically significant. Both the salient and nonsalient groups within the World War II generation placed a high priority on a world of peace (4th) and the pattern was totally lost within this age group.

As with the value of a world at peace, the three youngest adult age groups did show similar trends for some of the personally-oriented values. The "age of dissent" adults and the "cold war generation" adults placed significantly higher priorities on the value of pleasure and the other two adult groups showed a similar trend but the differences did not reach significance.Adults in the "me generation" and the "cold war generation" placed significantly higher priorities on an exciting life, however, the other two adult age groups did not even show the same trend.

The composite rankings for all adolescent and adult age groups only differ by a few ranks in all but one instance. This exception is for the society-oriented value of a world at peace which is always ranked 7 or higher by those who view the nuclear threat as salient.

SUMMARY

Almost one in four adolescent respondents in this expressed concern about the nuclear threat. The notion expressed by some peace researchers that large number of our youth are experiencing despair, are interested only in themselves and the here and now, and are not planning for the future must be tempered by these findings. In fact, as hypothesized, it was those adolescents who expressed concern about the nuclear threat, who consistently placing lower priority on more personally-oriented values and higher priorities on the society-oriented values.

The results regarding the value differences of those concerned about the nuclear threat and those not concerned demonstrated overall value hierarchy similarities between the two groups. Individuals who find the nuclear threat salient in their lives value a world at peace much more highly than those who do not. While other personally-oriented terminal value differences were statistically significant, the actual composite ranks for the two groups were quite similar.

REFERENCES

Ball-Rokeach, S., Rokeach, M.,& Grube, J. (1984) The great American value test. New York: Free Press.

Dodds, J. B. (1983). The effects on children of growing up under the threat of nuclear holocaust. Unpublished manuscript, University of Denver.

Elder, J. (1965). A summary of research on reactions of children to nuclear war. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 35(1), 120-123.

Escalona, S. (1965). Children and the threat of nuclear war. In M. Schwebel (Ed.), Behavior science and human survival (pp. 201-209). Palo Alto, CA: Behavioral Science Press.

Fiske, S. (1987). People's reactions to nuclear war: Implications for psychologists. American Psychologist. 42(3), 207-217.

Fiske, S.T. & Taylor, S.E. (1984). Social cognition. New York: Random House.

Hamilton, S.B. (1987, August) The use of attitudinal typologies in nuclear war research. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, New York.

Macpherson, M. & Meador, M. (1987, July). Political fear and mental health among German pre-teenagers. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology. San Francisco, CA.

Mayton, D.M. (1989, April). Value priority differences across levels of nuclear concern. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Psychological Association, Reno, NV.

Mayton, D.M. (1988). Measurement of nuclear war attitudes: Methods and concerns. Basic and Applied Social Psychology. 9(4), 241-263.

Mayton, D.M. (1987, August). Salience of the nuclear threat: Operationalization through spontaneous concern. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, New York.

Mayton, D.M. (1986). Spontaneous concern about nuclear war by college students. Basic and Applied Social Psychology. 7(3), 185-193.

Rokeach, M. (1973). The nature of human values. New York: Free Press.

Rokeach, M. (ed.) (1979). Understanding human values, New York: Free Press.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	Adolescents		Adult Generations			
	Junior High	Senior High	Me	Dissent	Cold War	WW II
Sex						
Male	53	52	30	31	40	41
Female	47	48	70	68	60	59
Ethnicity						
Caucasian	90	91	94	94	96	98
Native American	5	4	3	2	1	2
Other	5	5	3	4	3	0

Table 2

Concern About The Nuclear Threat Across Age Groups

Age Group	Not Concerned About Nuclear War	Concerned About Nuclear War
Junior High School (n = 2555)	74.7 %	25.3 %
Senior High School (n = 2725)	76.4 %	23.6 %
Me Generation (n = 363)	84.0 %	16.0 %
Age of Dissent (n = 346)	83.2 %	16.8 %
Cold War Generation (n = 194)	83.0 %	17.0 %
World War II Generation (n = 121)	76.0 %	24.0 %

Table 3

Composite Ranks for Terminal Value Hierarchies of Junior High School Students

Terminal Value	Not Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 1647)	Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 581)
TRUE FRIENDSHIP	1	3
HEALTH	2	2
FREEDOM	3	1
FAMILY SECURITY	4	5
A COMFORTABLE LIFE	5 *	6
AN EXCITING LIFE	6 ***	7
A WORLD AT PEACE	7	4 ***
SELF-RESPECT	8 *	8
A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT	9	10
MATURE LOVE	10 *	13
WISDOM	11	9
PLEASURE	12 *	12
EQUALITY	13	11
A WORLD OF BEAUTY	14 ***	17
SOCIAL RECOGNITION	15	14
SALVATION	16	15
NATIONAL SECURITY	17	16
INNER HARMONY	18 *	18

Mann-Whitney U test was employed to assess differences.
* significantly higher priority at $p < .05$ level
** significantly higher priority at $p < .01$ level
*** significantly higher priority at $p < .001$ level

Table 4

Composite Ranks for Terminal Value Hierarchies of Senior High School Students

Terminal Value	Not Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 1874)	Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 590)
HEALTH	1 *	4
TRUE FRIENDSHIP	2	2
SELF-RESPECT	3	1
FREEDOM	4	3 **
A COMFORTABLE LIFE	5	6
FAMILY SECURITY	6	5
MATURE LOVE	7 ***	10
WISDOM	8	8
AN EXCITING LIFE	9 **	11
A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT	10	9
PLEASURE	11 **	12
A WORLD AT PEACE	12	7 ***
INNER HARMONY	13	14
EQUALITY	14	13 **
SOCIAL RECOGNITION	15	15
SALVATION	16	16
A WORLD OF BEAUTY	17	17
NATIONAL SECURITY	18	18

Mann-Whitney U test was employed to assess differences.
* significantly higher priority at $p < .05$ level
** significantly higher priority at $p < .01$ level
*** significantly higher priority at $p < .001$ level

Table 5

Composite Ranks for Terminal Value Hierarchies of "Me Generation" Adults

Terminal Value	Not Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 290)	Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 55)
FAMILY SECURITY	1	1
HEALTH	2	2
SELF-RESPECT	3	3
FREEDOM	4	8
TRUE FRIENDSHIP	5	5
INNER HARMONY	6	6
MATURE LOVE	7	7
SALVATION	8	13
WISDOM	9	9
A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT	10	11
A COMFORTABLE LIFE	11	10
A WORLD AT PEACE	12	4 ***
EQUALITY	13	12
PLEASURE	14	16
NATIONAL SECURITY	15	15
AN EXCITING LIFE	16 *	18
A WORLD OF BEAUTY	17	14
SOCIAL RECOGNITION	18	17

Mann-Whitney U test was employed to assess differences.
* significantly higher priority at $p < .05$ level
** significantly higher priority at $p < .01$ level
*** significantly higher priority at $p < .001$ level

Table 6

Composite Ranks for Terminal Value Hierarchies of "Age of Dissent" Adults

Terminal Value	Not Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 267)	Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 58)
FAMILY SECURITY	1	1
HEALTH	2	2
SELF-RESPECT	3	4
INNER HARMONY	4	6
FREEDOM	5	3
TRUE FRIENDSHIP	6	8
WISDOM	7 **	9
MATURE LOVE	8	7
SALVATION	9	10
A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT	10	12
A WORLD AT PEACE	11	5 **
EQUALITY	12	11
A COMFORTABLE LIFE	13	14
NATIONAL SECURITY	14	13 *
PLEASURE	15 *	17
A WORLD OF BEAUTY	16	15
AN EXCITING LIFE	17	16
SOCIAL RECOGNITION	18 *	18

Mann-Whitney U test was employed to assess differences.
* significantly higher priority at $p < .05$ level
** significantly higher priority at $p < .01$ level
*** significantly higher priority at $p < .001$ level

Table 7

Composite Ranks for Terminal Value Hierarchies of "Cold War Generation" Adults

Terminal Value	Not Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 142)	Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 33)
HEALTH	1	1
FAMILY SECURITY	2	2
SELF-RESPECT	3	3
SALVATION	4	10
INNER HARMONY	5	6
FREEDOM	6	4
WISDOM	7	8
TRUE FRIENDSHIP	8 *	12
A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT	9	7
A WORLD AT PEACE	10	5
MATURE LOVE	11	13
EQUALITY	12	11
A COMFORTABLE LIFE	13	14
NATIONAL SECURITY	14	9
A WORLD OF BEAUTY	15	15
PLEASURE	16 *	17
AN EXCITING LIFE	17 *	18
SOCIAL RECOGNITION	18	16

Mann-Whitney U test was employed to assess differences.
* significantly higher priority at $p < .05$ level
** significantly higher priority at $p < .01$ level
*** significantly higher priority at $p < .001$ level

Table 8

Composite Ranks for Terminal Value Hierarchies of "World War II Generation" Adults

Terminal Value	Not Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 69)	Concerned About Nuclear War (n= 27)
SALVATION	1	3
HEALTH	2	1
FAMILY SECURITY	3	2
A WORLD AT PEACE	4	4
SELF-RESPECT	5	5
INNER HARMONY	6	13
WISDOM	7	8
A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT	8	7
TRUE FRIENDSHIP	9	11
FREEDOM	10	6
A COMFORTABLE LIFE	11	9
EQUALITY	12	10
NATIONAL SECURITY	13	12
MATURE LOVE	14	16
A WORLD OF BEAUTY	15	14
PLEASURE	16	17
SOCIAL RECOGNITION	18	18
AN EXCITING LIFE	17	15